DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 436 895 EC 307 568

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|---|---|
| TITLE | Transition: School to Post-School Activities: Access to Vocational Education for Students with Disabilities. Issues in Education. Technical Assistance Bulletin. |
| INSTITUTION | Missouri State Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, Jefferson City. Div. of Special Education. |
| PUB DATE | 1999-01-00 |
| NOTE | 6p. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | Division of Special Education, Missouri Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102. Tel: 573-751-0699; Fax: 573-526-4404. |
| PUB TYPE | Guides - Non-Classroom (055) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC01 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Academic Accommodations (Disabilities); *Access to Education; Classroom Environment; *Curriculum; *Disabilities; Education Work Relationship; Educational Discrimination; Eligibility; Individualized Education Programs; Postsecondary Education; Secondary Education; *Student Participation; Transitional Programs; *Vocational Education; Vocational Training Centers |
| IDENTIFIERS | Missouri |

ABSTRACT

This bulletin provides guidance and direction to Missouri local education agencies (LEAs) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams regarding the U.S. Office of Special Education Program's findings that indicate Missouri students with disabilities were held to entrance requirements for vocational education programs without consideration of accommodations, and that Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams were not allowed to include accommodations or modifications which might be necessary for students with disabilities to be successful in vocational courses. It addresses: (1) types of vocational programs that are available for students with disabilities in area vocational technical schools; (2) eligibility determinations for these programs and the requirement for equal access for students with disabilities with accommodations; (3) the requirement to provide students with disabilities with the same accommodations or modifications in vocational education classes that they receive when participating in general education classes; (4) types of accommodations or modifications that are available to students with disabilities to enable them to be successful in vocational courses; (5) classroom modifications, such as seating assignments, use of cooperative learning, videotaped demonstrations, and development of behavior contracts; and (6) curriculum modifications such as oral testing, taped textbooks, assistive devices, computer-assisted learning, and extended time for testing. (CR)

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ED 436 895

# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BULLETIN

## FROM THE MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

## ISSUES IN EDUCATION

# TRANSITION: SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ACCESS TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

## JANUARY 1999

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EC 307568

Technical Assistance Bulletin

January 1999

from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Special Education

# Issues *in* EDUCATION

Please copy and route to your staff

This bulletin is in response to the 1997 Office of Special Education Program's (OSEP's) monitoring of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Findings of **noncompliance** were:

- Students with disabilities were held to entrance requirements for vocational education programs without consideration of accommodations.
- Individualized education program (IEP) teams were not allowed to include accommodations or modifications which might be necessary for students with disabilities to be successful in vocational courses.

The Division of Special Education has prepared this technical assistance bulletin to provide technical assistance to vocational technical school staff, teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, and students. Featured are OSEP's findings for Part B under IDEA in the section addressing *Free Appropriate Public Education - Access to Program Options.* Information also has been taken from the *Vocational Resource Educator Handbook* and from *Issues in Transition (Roles and Policies).*

EC 307568

## Transition

## *School to Post-school Activities*

### Access to Vocational Education for Students with Disabilities

***What types of vocational programs are available for students with disabilities in area vocational technical schools?***

**All** vocational programs are available for students with disabilities. In comprehensive high schools, vocational programs such as business and office, family consumer science, vocational agriculture, and marketing are typically offered. In area vocational technical schools, trade and industrial programs such as welding, carpentry, auto mechanics, and food service also are offered.

***How is eligibility determined for these programs? Are there specific entrance requirements students must pass to be admitted?***

Everyone is eligible for consideration into a vocational program. While it is left up to local districts as to whether or not they have specific entry criteria for vocational programs, as well as whether there is a limit on the number of students who may be admitted into certain programs, the local districts are required by law to have a nondiscriminatory selection policy.

For students with disabilities, the IEP team utilizes the information from the vocational evaluator, the special needs counselor, and others to ensure that an appropriate IEP is developed including the necessary accommodations and modifications to allow the student to successfully gain entrance into and complete a vocational program. If the student, with or without modifications and accommodations listed on their IEP, meets requisite entry requirements and there is space available in the specified vocational program, then the IEP would be implemented. If, however, there were no spaces currently available, then the IEP team would have to reconvene to determine how the IEP would be carried out. Teams could consider other vocational programs or agencies to implement the goals and objectives of the IEP.

Equal access must be provided into all vocational education programs, services, or activities. These include occupation specific courses of study, cooperative education, apprenticeship programs, and comprehensive career guidance and counseling services.

Vocational education programs, services, and activities will be provided for individuals with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE) in accordance with their IEP.

## Instructional Methods

- Provide frequent student comprehension checks throughout lectures, demonstrations or instructions.
- Emphasize key points; repeat or summarize them.
- Prepare a few questions to help gauge the extent of your student's subject knowledge.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Present lengthy material in short segments, allowing for breaks.
- Use audiovisual aids to illustrate and clarify.
- Actively involve the students; ask them questions and seek their help for demonstrations.
- Vary methods of presentations.
- Give feedback often.
- Use concrete examples.
- Use demonstration.
- Break down tasks sequentially; provide step-by-step instruction.
- Minimize irrelevant information.
- Provide private work space for a student who is easily distracted.

## Equipment Modifications

- Digital or talking watch
- Guard rails on machines
- Hand or foot controls
- Warning lights or noises
- Jigs or fixtures
- Illustrated (not written) instructions
- Taped/audio-visualized instructions
- Large print materials

Vocational technical schools may have established entrance requirements for vocational courses that students must meet prior to enrollment. Vocational instructors also may have a list of "entry level skills" that are necessary for success in certain programs. Accommodations for students with disabilities must be considered to help students meet these requirements. These entrance requirements or "lists" have been established to help students determine which courses offered at the vocational technical school match their interests, skills, and abilities.

Special educators can use these "lists" to prepare students with disabilities for entry into a vocational program. However, it is important to note that these entrance requirements should not be used to screen out students with disabilities, but rather to identify those "prevocational skills" or "support services" necessary to be successful in a vocational education program.

In Missouri, there are two commonly used methods of teaching prevocational skills in preparation for entry into vocational programs:

- **Vocational Preparation Programs** can be one to three hour classes which provide students with the additional skills necessary to succeed in existing eleventh and twelfth grade vocational programs. On completion, students will enroll in existing programs at a vocational school.
- **Early Entry Programs** are for students needing an extra year in the vocational program to master essential skills. Students cannot be placed in early entry before they enter the ninth grade or reach 15 years of age. Students with disabilities can qualify to enter a vocational program one year early if the school documents through the IEP and proper assessment that the student can benefit from the additional training.

Prevocational activities include teaching basic functional skills, personal-social skills, and employability skills. These skills help prepare a student for success in vocational training programs.

***Are students with disabilities subject to these same entrance requirements? Can accommodations be made?***

Students with disabilities are required to pass the same entrance requirements and perform at the same skill level in vocational education programs as any other student. However, students with disabilities must be provided with appropriate accommodations or modifications, based upon their individual needs.

For example, if a student with a disability wanted to enroll in a carpentry course in which the instructor had identified a list of certain competencies students should have prior to enrollment and had developed a test to assess those competencies, the student must pass the test. The student also must be allowed the accommodations indicated in the IEP for any regular education program. Accommodations could include extended time for testing in shorter increment periods, more time for practice, use of a reader, or simply taking the test alone in a room with no distractions.

***Are IEP teams allowed to include accommodations or modifications for students with disabilities to be successful once enrolled in vocational courses?***

When participating in vocational education classes, students with disabilities must be provided with the same accommodations or modifications that they receive when participating in general education classes. However, there are skills that are important in vocational education that may not be emphasized in the general education curriculum. The

vocational instructor should contact a member of the IEP team if a student with disabilities begins to experience difficulty to determine if additional accommodations, modifications, or support services are necessary to enable the student to be successful in the vocational education program. The IEP team can then review this information and, if necessary, include additional accommodations in the IEP.

It is important to understand that accommodations simply "level the playing field" and allow special education students **access to and opportunity for success** in the same vocational education programs as other students. Accommodations or modifications must be made based upon individual student needs.

### *What accommodations or modifications are available for students with disabilities to enable them to be successful in vocational courses?*

There are many different types of accommodations, modifications, and support services available to students with disabilities to ensure they succeed in their vocational classes. Examples of modifications and accommodations that may be considered, depending upon the individual's needs, are listed in the boxes throughout this bulletin.

Support staff and personnel also can be vital resources in providing appropriate accommodations, modifications, and support services necessary for students with disabilities to be successful in vocational programs.

The **vocational resource educator (VRE)** is a nonteaching professional staff member who serves as a student advocate and a resource person for teachers to assure each student's vocational education needs are being met.

VRE activities may include:

- Participating in the IEP process;
- coordinating services with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation;
- assisting the vocational director/dean/counselor to integrate students with disabilities into the mainstream;
- working with sending schools to coordinate instructional goals;
- providing readers, interpreters, and note-takers;
- advising and assisting in curriculum modification needs; and
- serving as a community/agency/parental liaison.

**Basic skills instructors** usually provide individual or small group instruction in the mathematics, reading, and writing skills necessary for successful completion of a vocational education program. The instruction is provided in cooperation with the vocational instructor and while enrolled in a vocational program.

**Supplemental professional staff** are certified teachers who work as a "team" teacher with a vocational instructor. The supplemental teacher often works with the VRE to implement behavior plans or one-to-one assistance in the lab for students who need this type of assistance.

**Vocational teacher aides** assist teachers of students with disabilities.

## Curriculum Modifications

If the modifications/accommodations allow the student to achieve all the competencies other students will achieve in the class, the modifications are considered to be minimal.

- Oral testing
- Taped textbooks
- Calculator use
- Not graded for spelling
- Note-taker use
- Cue card use for steps of task
- Assistive device use
- Study guide use
- Study skills instruction
- Listing formulas for tests
- Computer-assisted learning
- Extended time for testing
- Extended time for writing assignments
- More time for practice of certain tasks
- Computer use for writing tasks
- Reader use
- Highlighting important facts in text
- Written rather than oral direction use
- Test review sessions
- Conversion tables use
- Listing vocabulary for test
- Tape recording lectures

Extensive modifications call for meeting the student's needs by decreasing the breadth or depth of the curriculum. When using extensive modifications, be sure the student has a vocational goal that can be met through the instructional program, however modified.

- Deleting one or more competency areas
- Allowing use of notes/text on tests
- Using a parallel alternate curriculum
- Assigning shorter and/or fewer assignments
- Using a different textbook
- Providing early entry

**Interpreters, readers, and note-takers** may be hired on either a full or part-time basis, depending upon the needs of students.

**Vocational evaluators and special needs counselors** help students make appropriate decisions about career goals. The vocational evaluator provides services to measure, observe, and document an individual's interests, values, temperaments, work-related behaviors, aptitudes and skills, physical capacities, learning style, and training needs. To help students with disabilities identify their interests, skills and abilities, and vocational potential, a comprehensive vocational assessment is completed. The special needs counselor helps ensure the students are placed in appropriate vocational programs, helps them complete the programs, and move successfully from school to employment or further training.

A vocational instructor does not need to modify the curriculum for every student with disabilities, and every student with disabilities will not need all of the support services/personnel listed above. However, it is critical that IEP teams are aware of all the accommodations, modifications, and support services available; and be prepared to provide those services necessary to enable students with disabilities success in vocational education programs.

The majority of students with disabilities in vocational education are of average intelligence, aptitude, and ability. Many careers are available to these students when their interests, aptitudes, and abilities are carefully matched to vocational training programs and occupations.

With support services, proper planning, and vocational preparation, students with disabilities not only have access to all vocational education programs, but enroll and successfully complete vocational courses leading to competitive employment or further training.

If you have specific questions regarding access to or eligibility for vocational education programs; or accommodations/modifications for students with disabilities participating in a vocational course, call your local VRE, special needs counselor, or area supervisor for special education (573-751-0699), or supervisor of transition services (573-526-0299) in the Division of Special Education.

## Classroom Modifications

Classroom modifications generally fall into "low-tech" solutions: adjustable tables, tilted monitors, one-handed keyboards, rolling chairs, and creating enough space for a student who uses a wheelchair or crutches to easily access tools, equipment, and books. These might be considered architectural solutions. Classroom modifications also can be programmatic and applied to assist with individual student needs or general classroom management. Below are some common modifications for the classroom and some reasons for their use:

- Arrangement of desks/tables in a U-formation – Facilitates classroom discussion.
- Desks/tables in traditional line – Helps keep students from distracting others.
- Seating assignments – Separates students who distract each other, but also encourages a fast learner to help a slower peer.
- Seating in front of class – Helps students with visual or hearing impairments or students with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).
- Use of cooperative learning – Assists group learners and tactile/kinesthetic learners.
- Video taped demonstrations – Helps students who have been absent or to reinforce a procedure.
- A "quiet" area – Helps explosive or easily distracted students.
- Use of a buddy system – Helps students assist each other, especially in shop areas.
- Development of behavior contracts – Assists student in defining appropriate behaviors and consequences for inappropriate behaviors.
- Individual conferences – Assists all students in understanding how their behavior is helping/hindering their learning.

## Resources


Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (1996). *Issues in transition (roles and policies)*. Columbia, MO: Center for Innovations in Special Education.

Center for Innovations in Special Education. (1997). *Vocational resource educator handbook*. Columbia, MO: Instructional Materials Laboratory. (Available from IML, #95-0004-I; (800) 669-2465.)



The development and printing of this material was supported entirely by federal funds appropriated in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This bulletin will be distributed periodically from the Division of Special Education, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, PO Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102; fax [573] 526=4404, phone (573) 751-0699. This bulletin is made possible under contract by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, which complies with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Civil Rights Act of 1991, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Services are provided without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, or physical or mental disability. If you have needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and need this publication in an alternative format, notify the Center for Innovations in Special Education at (573) 884-7275, (800) 976-CISE (MO only), or Relay MO (800) 735-2966 (TDD). Efforts will be made to accommodate your needs.





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